

Abstract 591

TITLE: The Black Church's Response to HIV/AIDS

AUTHORS: Hobbs, FW Jr.

ISSUE: The needs that are addressed in this project are two-fold: 1) the lack of faith-based leadership support for HIV prevention policies and programs in the African-American communities, and 2) the lack of spiritually based HIV prevention programs and HIV services targeting African-American communities. As the most respected cultural institution within the black community, the church has the ability to influence the values and actions of not only the congregations, but also wider segments of the community. The faith leaders are in need of a clearer "roadmap" for developing effective HIV prevention ministries that is sensitive to the church's "cultural" values and norms.

SETTING: Within local churches and other community settings throughout Greater Boston.

PROJECT: Healing Our Land acts as a "spiritual filter" through which HIV prevention programs and materials flow to produce effective HIV prevention ministries, utilizing the following programmatic strategies:

1. Conduct culturally sensitive outreach;
2. Implement quarterly forums for those committed to establishing a network for developing and maintaining prevention and healing ministries through the black church;
3. Building churches' capacity to facilitate the eradication of AIDS via training and technical assistance;
4. Link the church community/programs to existing services/resources in the HIV provider community;
5. Mobilize the African-American community via a march for the prevention and healing of HIV disease.

RESULTS: The following quantitative and qualitative data was collected from participants who attended the first three of Healing Our Land's quarterly forums (n = 310). The average response rate was 40%. Forty-nine different churches from the greater Boston area have been participator.

More than 50% of respondents enjoyed everything about the program: the worship, fellowship, information, presence of the Holy Spirit and the spirit of unity. Over 65% mentioned gaining a greater understanding of HIV/AIDS. Ninety-Six percent of respondents indicated that their church did not have an HIV/AIDS ministry. Nine churches have requested technical assistance to develop HIV prevention ministries. Numerous individuals have received counseling and referrals.

LESSONS LEARNED: The black church wants to respond to HIV; they just need a platform that is culturally appropriate. It is key to keep the momentum going for comprehensive, coordinated programs and services.

PRESENTER CONTACT INFORMATION

Name: Minister Franklin W. Hobbs Jr.

Address: 5 Whitten Street

Boston, MA 02122

Telephone: (617) 265-5841